

# Ithaca First Presbyterian Church

218 E. Newark St. PO Box 48 Ithaca, Michigan 48847

July 3, 2020

Dear Ithaca First Presbyterian Church Family,

In 150 years, our congregation has seen and survived some incredibly trying times. Since February 1870, the First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca, Michigan has lived through two world wars, the Great Depression, conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East, the 1918 influenza pandemic, the tragic, career-ending accident of a pastor, and the sudden loss of a much-beloved music director – just to name a few of the fires we’ve faced. I’ve always known that the Ithaca Presbyterians were made of strong stuff – and these past 16 weeks of living in a “new normal” due to the COVID-19 pandemic have proven that fact once again.

We’ve had to “do” worship in a different way – moving to an online presence, and worshipping via YouTube, Zoom, and Facebook. I know it hasn’t been easy, nor has it necessarily been what we wanted to do. We’ve missed being together, and in a time when our church family needed to lean on each other, we’ve been forced to cope in different ways. I have to say that as your pastor, I am very proud of you for the way you’ve pulled together in this time. You’ve proven in this time that “being church” never was about the building. Thank you for being you.

Your Session has decided that we should try to resume in-person worship on Sunday, July 12.

For some of you, this will be welcome news, and possibly news you would have wished for weeks ago. For some of you, this will not be news you wanted to hear – it may seem too soon when the news is full of stories of increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases. I hear you – all of you. I share in your desire to be back in the sanctuary, and your worries about the increasing number of cases. Trust me – I hear you loud and clear, and I pray continually that we are on the path God has truly ordained for us.

To that end, there are some things that will be vastly different when we gather in the sanctuary again. Worship will not look much at all like it did on March 8, but it will be worship just the same. Please know that when Session and I put together this list of requirements, we did so with the safety and welfare of all of our church family and our community in our hearts, and firmly ensconced in prayer. Inter-pandemic, in-person worship has been planned with our collective safety in mind, taking into consideration the research and opinions of colleagues and experts who are more learned on these subjects than I am. Please trust me when I say that I do not want, nor do I anticipate, our church becoming a hotspot for a Gratiot County outbreak, and it will take all of us to do our parts to make sure that doesn’t happen.

On the following pages, you will find information about what worship will look like, and what you will be expected to do should you choose to worship with us in-person, starting July 12. Please study these and make your own informed decisions about coming back to in-person worship. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me.

Know that you stay firmly in my heart, and in my prayers.

It truly is my joy to be your pastor,

Pastor Christina

Loving generously. Speaking truthfully. Serving faithfully.